

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1187

FOR THE SECRETARY'S PARTY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, SY FR
SUBJECT: DE GUIRINGAUD VISIT TO SYRIA: INITIAL IMPRESSIONS

1. SUMMARY. FRENCH FONMIN FOUND SYRIANS MORE OUTSPOKEN THAN HE
HAD EXPECTED IN THEIR DESIRE FOR PEACE, BUT UNWILLING TO GO
BEYOND STATEMENTS OF PRINCIPLE ON SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES. PLO MUST
BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN PROCESS. END SUMMARY

2. CHARGE SAW FRENCH EMBOFF BRIEFLY EVENING FEBRUARY 19.
EMBOFF HAD PARTICIPATED ONLY IN MEETING WITH PNC CHAIRMAN
FAHUM BUT WAS ABLE TO PASS ON SEVERAL COMMENTS ABOUT DE GUIRINGAUD'S
MEETINGS WITH ASAD AND KHADDAM AS WELL AS GENERAL ATMOSPHERIES
OF VISIT. DE GUIRINGAUD HAD BEEN STRUCK BY EXTENT TO WHICH BOTH
ASAD AND KHADDAM SOUGHT TO IMPRESS ON FRENCH SYRIA'S GENUINE DESIRE
AND READINESS FOR PEACE. FRENCH ALSO IMPRESSED WITH GREAT HOPE PRES.
ASAD WAS PLACING IN U.S. ROLE OF FRANCE, ASAD HAD SAID DURING
HIS TWO HOUR MEETING WITH FONMIN, WAS FIRST TO PERSUADE MORE
RETICENT
EUROPEAN PARTNERS PARTICULARLY NETHERLANDS, GREAT BRITAIN AND
TO SOME EXTENT WEST GERMANY OF NEED FOR STRONGER EUROPEAN
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STAND AND SECOND, TO PUT PRESSURE ON U.S. AND ISRAEL TO NEGOTIATE
JUST PEACE. ASAD HAD NOT SPECIFICALLY ASKED THAT FRENCH PARTICIPATE
IN GENEVA CONFERENCE. HE THOUGHT GENEVA MIGHT BE CONVENED IN SECOND
HALF OF 1977 AND RECOGNIZED NEED TO WAIT UNTIL ISRAELI ELECTIONS
HAD BEEN COMPLETED. GENEVA CONFERENCE WAS NOT THE ONLY POSSIBLE
WAY TO PROCEED; SYRIA WAS FLEXIBLE ON THIS. BUT IF GENEVA WERE
CONVENED, PLO WOULD HAVE TO BE INVITED OR SYRIA WOULD NOT GO. ONCE

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INVITED, SYRIA PREFERRED ARABS TO GO AS UNIFIED DELEGATION BUT WAS NOT INSISTENT ON IT. NUMBER AND COMPOSITION OF ARAB DELEGATIONS COULD BE WORKED OUT.

3. DE GUIRINGAUD FOUND KHADDAM HARDER IN TONE AND SHARPER TONGUED THAN ASAD BUT STILL VERY DESIROUS OF PEACE. FIVE HOURS OF TALKS IN TWO SESSIONS HAD BEGUN WITH TETE A TETE MEETINGS ON POLITICAL ISSUES, THEN EXPANDED FOR DISCUSSION OF ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL QUESTIONS. KHADDAM HAD STRESSED THAT IF NO PROGRESS WERE MADE IN 1977

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ARAB LEADERS WHO HAD COMMITTED THEMSELVES TO POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WOULD BE FACED WITH DIFFICULT INTERNAL PRESSURES. KHADDAM USED PRES. SADAT AS EXAMPLE BUT FRENCH HAD IMPRESSION HE MEANT SYRIA AS WELL. MOREOVER, KHADDAM SAID, LIBYA AND IRAQ WOULD USE PALESTINIANS TO BRING ABOUT RESURGENCE OF REJECTIONISM IN ARAB WORLD. KHADDAM HAD BELITTLED IDEA OF A PALESTINIAN-JORDANIAN LINK BEFORE GENEVA AS "ONE OF SADAT'S IDEAS". HE SAID WORKING OUT THE RELATIONSHIP WOULD TAKE MUCH LONGER THAN THAT BUT, SIGNIFICANTLY, HE DID NOT DISMISS THE CONCEPT.

4. DE GUIRINGAUD HAD SAID TO FRENCH COLLEAGUES AFTER MEETINGS THAT HE FOUND NO APPRECIABLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KHADDAM'S PRIVATE REMARKS TO HIM AND HIS DINNER SPEECH FEB 19. PERTINENT PORTION OF SPEECH FROM FEB 20 PRESS READS, "WE HAVE ALWAYS DECLARED THAT WE WELCOME ANY EFFORT EXERTED TO ESTABLISH JUST AND DURABLE PEACE IN THE AREA. WE HAVE INDICATED THAT JUST AND DURABLE
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PEACE, AS WE SEE IT, IS BASED ON TWO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES.. TOTAL WITHDRAWAL FROM ALL ARAB TERRITORIES OCCUPIED IN 1967 AND RECOGNITION AND GUARANTEEING RIGHTS OF PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. PROBLEM OF PEOPLE OF PALESTINE IS CRUX OF THE MATTER, AND UNLESS THIS PROBLEM IS RESOLVED, ANY TALK ABOUT PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST REMAINS INCOMPLETE. THUS, WE BELIEVE THAT INVITING THE PLO, WHICH INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HAS ACKNOWLEDGED AS SOLE LEGITIMATE REPRESENTATIVE OF ARAB PEOPLE OF PALESTINE, TO PARTICIPATE IN SEARCH FOR COMPREHENSIVE SETTLEMENT OF ME PROBLEM IS A FUNDAMENTAL CONDITION WITHOUT WHICH NO PROGRESS TOWARD PEACE CAN POSSIBLY BE MADE. ISRAEL'S ATTITUDE WITH ITS OBSTINACY, INTRANSIGENCE AND DEFIANCE OF UN RESOLUTIONS IS THREATENING INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY... THIS LEADS US TO ASK YOU, AND THE STATES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY, AND OTHER STATES CONCERNED WITH THE ISSUE OF PEACE, TO ADOPT MORE ADVANCED POSITIONS IN DIRECTION OF ESTABLISHING PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN ACCORDANCE WITH RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS."

5. DE GUIRINGAUD FOUND PNC CHAIRMAN FAHUM VERY MODERATE DURING THEIR

ONE AND HALF HOUR MEETING. FAHUM ALSO DID NOT REJECT SADAT FORMULA ON JORDAN-PALESTINIAN LINK BUT CAUTIONED THAT PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION WITH JORDAN WOULD TAKE TIME. IN ANSWER TO FONMIN'S QUESTION, FAHUM SAID IT WAS DOUBTFUL THAT NEXT MONTH'S PNC WOULD OR COULD AMEND CHARTER. HE EXPLAINED THAT CHARTER AMENDMENT COULD TAKE PLACE ONLY AT SPECIAL SESSION AND UPON TWO MONTHS ADVANCE NOTICE TO MEMBERS OF AMENDMENTS PROPOSED. DE GUIRINGAUD PURSUED POINT, ASKING WHETHER IN THAT CASE PNC COULD NOT ADOPT "DECLARATION OF INTENT" TO SEEK EARLY CHARTER AMENDMENT. FAHUM DID NOT REPLY. DE GUIRINGAUD THEN ASKED HOW PLO WOULD FEEL ABOUT SOME FORM OF RECIPROCAL RECOGNITION BEING WORKED OUT BETWEEN IT AND ISRAEL. FAHUM'S ANSWER WAS THAT ISRAEL BEING THE UNJUST OCCUPIER OF PALESTINIAN LANDS MUST RECOGNIZE PLO FIRST.

6. IN PRESS CONFERENCE EVENING FEB. 20 AFTER ABOVE ROUND OF MEETINGS, DE GUIRINGAUD STATED THAT JORDAN HAD IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN SETTLEMENT PROCESS, THAT PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN CONFIDENTIAL

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FAHUM HAD TOLD HIM UPCOMING PNC MEETING WOULD DECIDE WHETHER TO CHANGE PALESTINIAN DOCTRINE ON COEXISTENCE WITH ISRAEL, THAT PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN ME BETTER NOW THAN EVER BEFORE, AND THAT THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES TO GENEVA MEPC. HE CHARACTERIZED GENEVA AS ONE WAY TO REACH PEACE SETTLEMENT. FONMIN OTHERWISE REITERATED THAT HE AND PRES. ASAD HAS DISCUSSED PROSPECTS FOR PEACE IN REGION AND LEBANESE PROBLEM. HE NOTED THAT ASAD HAD REAFFIRMED SYRIAN READINESS TO WITHDRAW ITS FORCES FROM LEBANON WHEN SECURITY RESTORED AND HAD REMINDED HIM THAT ADF OPERATED UNDER AUTHORITY OF PRES. SARKIS. HE HAD PRESENTED ASAD WITH MESSAGE FROM PRES. GISCARD D'ESTAING. PELLETREAU

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